

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 14, 2020

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Esper and Secretary Azar:

We write to urge you to use your existing authorities to support small businesses in the coronavirus response through purchase guarantees and small business preferences, particularly for critical medical supplies.

In this time of global crisis, countless small businesses in our districts and across the country have stepped up to manufacture and distribute critical medical supplies needed for the COVID-19 response. Many of these small businesses have invested in retooling their facilities and acquiring material to make personal protective equipment (PPE) that are not necessarily related to their core business. While these small businesses have been able to supply much needed PPE to American families and healthcare workers on the frontlines, many have expressed concerns that uncertainty over future demand for such products could leave them with excess inventory and no market to serve.

At the same time, the COVID-19 emergency has underscored the need for a more resilient domestic industrial base for critical medical supplies. The nationwide shortage of surgical masks, respirators, face shields, surgical and isolation gowns, gloves, hand sanitizer, and more has hampered the response to the COVID-19 response. The use of the Strategic National Stockpile, while necessary, has proven to be insufficient and now must also be replenished.

To support our small businesses as well as strengthen the domestic industrial base and supply chain for critical medical supplies, we urge you to use your existing authorities to prioritize the purchase of medical supplies from small businesses to replenish the Strategic National Stockpile. In particular, 50 U.S.C. 4533 provides the Executive the authority to purchase or commit to purchase industrial resources for government use or resale in order to “maintain, protect, expand, or restore” domestic industrial base capabilities essential for national defense” and 50 U.S.C. 4551 states that “Small business concerns shall be given the maximum practicable opportunity to participate as contractors, and subcontractors at various tiers, in all programs to maintain and strengthen the Nation’s industrial base.”

Using such authorities to support small businesses will provide certainty for those that have stepped up when our country needed it most and it will enhance our ability to produce critical supplies domestically. Stronger small businesses and a stronger domestic supply chain will not

only better prepare us for the future, but it will also provide much needed support for our economy in a time of crisis.

We thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



GILBERT R. CISNEROS, JR.
Member of Congress

/s/
CINDY AXNE
Member of Congress

/s/
JIM BANKS
Member of Congress

/s/
SALUD CARBAJAL
Member of Congress

/s/
SHARICE L. DAVIDS
Member of Congress



JARED GOLDEN
Member of Congress



DON BACON
Member of Congress

/s/
TROY BALDERSON
Member of Congress

/s/
ANTHONY BRINDISI
Member of Congress

/s/
ANGIE CRAIG
Member of Congress

/s/
RODNEY DAVIS
Member of Congress



JIM HAGEDORN
Member of Congress

/s/

SHEILA JACKSON LEE
Member of Congress



ELAINE G. LURIA
Member of Congress

/s/

COLLIN C. PETERSON
Member of Congress

/s/

MAX ROSE
Member of Congress



JOHN ROSE
Member of Congress

/s/

HARLEY ROUDA
Member of Congress



AUSTIN SCOTT
Member of Congress

/s/

DARREN SOTO
Member of Congress

/s/

W. GREGORY STEUBE
Member of Congress

/s/

XOCHITL TORRES SMALL
Member of Congress



LORI TRAHAN
Member of Congress

/s/

FILEMON VELA
Member of Congress

/s/

JOE WILSON
Member of Congress